

BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO



December 2010

NEWSLETTER

Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, December 16, 2010** at 700 PM
Recreation Room, San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park, San
Francisco

December Program

Holiday Potluck and Gift Exchange

This month culminates another year for our society. Our membership grew this year, probably as a result of our great web site constructed and maintained by **Dan Arcos** and our bromeliad sales (we had two sales this year). There are many of our members that are not able to get to our monthly meetings. We hope that many of you will be able to join us for the holiday potluck.

Note that our meeting time this month is 7 PM instead of 7:30 PM.

This month's meeting will be an opportunity for us socialize and partake of great food. The society is providing a turkey and honey baked ham. We are asking you to bring a dish to share with the group – drinks, vegetable dish, rolls, desserts, etc. Please try to remember to bring serving silverware for the dish that you bring. We will provide plates, cups, silverware, and napkins. **Dan Arcos** is coordinating the food items. Dan has tried to contact each of you by phone or e-mail. If he missed you, please call **Dan (415-823-9661)** to see where you can fill in some of our gaps.

Our club will provide a plant for each member. You may also bring a special plant or plant-related item for exchange with the other members (not required).



2010 Programs

We enjoyed a wide variety of programs this year and gained several new members into the world of bromeliads. Thanks to **Bruce McCoy** for getting publicity about our society for each of our sales this year and arranging for an exceptional group of quality speakers. A thank you is given to all the people who participated in our two sales this year; these sales are our only money-making opportunity that enables us to obtain great speakers and great plant tables. Finally, we wish to thank the people who planned our garden tours and hosts for the garden tours in Marin County this year. Here are some highlights of our activities this year.

January

Peder Samuelsen treated us to a great slide show on the World Bromeliad Conference 2008 in Cairns, Australia. **Marilyn Moyer** and Peder were the only members of our society to attend the conference. We got to visit much of the environs north of Cairns including sand crabs with their unique patterns in the sand, kangaroos, koalas, and many birds. The plant show was very large for the space provided at the hotel so Peder could not get many shots of individual plants – either because of too many people in the room or inability to zero in on a single plant. We did get to see many of the beautiful displays scattered around the hotel lobby as well as the top award winners. Another highlight of the conference was the garden tours; there were five, ranging from small to huge. The largest grounds were wired with hidden speakers, lots of night lighting, and a crocodile (a fake one whose mouth periodically opened).

February

In February **Paul Isley**, proprietor of Rainforest Flora Nursery in southern California treated us to a slide show on the printing of his new book on Tillandsias. Since the book was printed in China, we able to visit China as well as learn about the printing process. Paul brought a few of his books to the meeting and they were all sold. Paul graciously donated one of the books to our library.

We had a huge turnout for the meeting and a massive group of beautiful show-and-tell plants. Paul also brought some tillandsias for sale. Considering the time devoted to plant selling, business, describing the show-and-tell plants, and

Paul's show we barely got out of the room before closing

March

Guillermo Rivera from Argentina provided a slide show of the bromeliads of Ecuador. Many of the bromeliads we saw in the show were new to almost all of our members. There were many *Guzmania* species and most of our members do not grow *Guzmanias*. However, one of our members did bring a *Guzmania* for show-and-tell that was in the slide show. And your editor brought a *Racinaea spiculosa* in flower that was also in Guillermo's show. Guillermo has organized a tour to Ecuador in 2011 and if you are interested in joining the tour check out Guillermo's website: www.cactusexpeditions.com.ar

April

Peter Wan provided a slide show of the bromeliads of Brazil. This is not completely true because Peter only covered the bromeliads that he saw in the states of Bahia and Minas Gerais on a tour with Guillermo Rivera; Brazil is a huge country and there are still lots more to discover. Just as the March meeting when Guillermo Rivera showed us bromeliads in Ecuador, many of the bromeliads we saw in the show were new to almost all of our members. Peter did a great job of showing us the countryside and towns that he visited on his trip. It was a great show.

We were all pleasantly surprised to have former member **Dennis Heckart** at our meeting visiting from Hawaii where he now lives. He graciously did our show-and-tell and it was an extravagant table as always. I think **Daryl Ducharme** got the award for the most intensely colored *Aechmea recurvata*. There were lots of these plants in flower at the meeting.

May

In May **Carl Carter** provided a slide show of the bromeliads that we can grow in our landscape. He included slides of these plants in habitat as well as in cultivation. Many of the habitat shots were taken in Brazil where we went last month with **Peter Wan**, but Carl showed us completely different shots. Coincidentally, one of the plants in Carl's show was also on the plant table: *Deuterocohnia brevispicata*. Thanks for a great show, Carl. We enjoyed it just as much as Clyde.

June

Mario Vega and **Lau Hodges** hosted a tour of the Conservatory of Flowers for us after closing time. We had a good turnout and plants looked better than your editor has ever seen them. We were supposed to be out of the building by 9 PM, but Mario was great to let us have our refreshments and plant raffle even though we went past 9.

July

Our annual Garden Tour took place in Marin County July 18. We had the privilege of visiting two California garden treasures. The first stop, the Don Worth garden, is filled with palm 'seedlings' from our own member **Inge Hoffmann**, who supplied many seeds for the original plantings. A special thanks to Bob Navaro for his warm hospitality. The second stop, the Halden Estate, voted Best Landscape Design in California by the California Landscape Association and is designed and maintained by our own member, **Casper Curto**. This is a very, very impressive place on so many levels. The third stop, at member **Ford Greene's** new place was particularly interesting for someone just undertaking new landscaping. The fourth garden at members **Tom Henthorne** and **Rob Wiley's** place was an incredible mixture of the wild and wonderful: a true inspiration to the inventor and adventurer. A warm thanks for the hosts, the great potluck and to all who attended. See you next year on the peninsula.

August

Kelly Griffin's show on his most recent trip to Mexico was memorable both for the wonderful photography and his infectious enthusiasm about the plants. Kelly also brought sale plants which were immediately snapped up. These plants were mostly Aloe hybrids that Kelly is noted for. He had planned to bring some bromeliads for sale but was unable to get them ready in time for the flight. We are already planning on having him back next year.

September

Richard Wiggin's show on Ecuador exposed us to life in a small village in Ecuador. He has been visiting this village for many years and we got to see photography of the local people in their unique dress that we would never see as a tourist. Most of the bromeliads that we saw were tillandsias and *Tillandsia secunda* was the most common growing like weeds along the sides of the road. Our president brought in a *T. secunda* in flower for the show-and-tell. Thanks Richard for showing us a side of Ecuador that we would never see.

October

Terrie Bert provided a fantastic slide show on bromeliads but she covered bromeliads from H to N – not A to L as your editor stated in last month's newsletter. She packed a lot of information on each slide including habitat maps, plant photos, how to grow them, and random photos of different actors. We learned a lot about these plants but some are not suitable for personal collections, such as *Mezobromelia*. We discovered the significance of the actor photos only at the end of the show and it is a secret.

Terrie also brought wonderful plants for sale most of which your editor did not even see because they were already claimed by others when he arrived. Terrie graciously told us about the plants we purchased and how to grow them. And the prices she charged were incredibly reasonable.

November

Peter Wan gave a show of his first trip to Argentina. Several years ago when Guillermo Rivera started his plant expeditions, many of us from Northern California took this trip, prompted by Walter Teague. Many of our society members were on this trip. Guillermo had advertised this as a cactus photo expedition and he was surprised that so many of us were into bromeliads; his subsequent trips promote bromeliads as well as cactus. Peter's show was a trip down memory lane for some of us and an interesting introduction to Argentina for all of us.

Color and Pollinators

Herb Plever wrote this article for the December 2008 Bromeliana, newsletter of the New York Bromeliad Society.

The color of our plants' bracts, petals and leaves is one of the main evolutionary strategies that evolved in bromeliads to attract pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and birds. The specific color or colors in a habitat were those that highly attracted the pollinators present in that area.

During their day-long search for food, pollinators may be attracted to bract, petal or leaf color. If they find the plants to be a good source of nectar, imprinting of the experience occurs and then biochemical triggers will continue to draw them to

the plants. This strategy guarantees continuous pollination of the bromeliad ovaries.

The pollinators may not “see” red as we do (bees, for example, probably see it as blue-green and they prefer yellow). This strategy refers to the visual attraction of color during the day. Some plants evolved in habitats where there were no such pollinators available, and plants with odoriferous flowers (usually putrid ones to us) were able to attract bats and moths that fly at night in those habitats that were attracted to those odors.

If different pollinators are attracted to different colors, over the eons those plants with “right” color for pollinators in their area will selectively thrive over those plants whose colors are not attractive to them. In the exquisite dialectical relationship between natural law and chance, all life on our planet from its beginning to the present has been shaped by Natural Selection.

Dr. David Benzing states in “Biology of the Bromeliads” (Mad River Press): “Implicit in explanation of how animal-mediated breeding systems operate is the assumption that a suitable pollinator will arrive at the right flower at the proper time to pick up or deposit pollen...” But how does it work?

Benzing continues: “...Bees and related special insects have sophisticated visual capacities and can sense both color and outline in sufficient detail to distinguish one flower type from another...bees perceive color, but not like we do. Bees have a trichromatic color vision system with UV, blue and yellow receptor pigments. Honeybees not only discriminate among these three primaries but perceive them in combination as well. Thus an insect’s realm is marked by shades of blue-green, blue UV and yellow UV.



Here is a drawing of insects visiting a bromeliad and pollinating it.

“Red-sensitivity is known in some butterflies, not an unexpected finding given the red to orange hues of many flowers served by these pollinators. Pigments which reflect or absorb UV are common in plant parts...petals that project a UV signal are mostly yellow or purple to our eyes.

“Bees not only see colors invisible to humans, but their compound eyes, made up of hundreds of tiny individual receptors and lenses, record solid objects in mosaic patterns rather than as the unbroken images familiar to us. This may significantly affect their ability to perceive shape and outline as well as to detect the movement of predators. Birds probably have visual capacities more like our own. Little is known about bat vision, or that of the less common insect visitors of bromeliads.” (Bromeliad pollinators such as hummingbirds are especially equipped to feed from relatively closed flowers in which the nectar is deep at the bottom. They have very long beaks and can hover stationary at the flowers by flapping their wings up to 80 times a second.)

Benzing continues: “Most birds and humans have rather poor olfactory capacities. Bats may be better off, while insects have the most remarkable sense of smell of all the pollinators. Olfaction is in fact their primary sense...”



Here is a hummingbird about to pollinate an Aechmea in the Atlantic Forest of Brazil. Photo is courtesy of Alex Popovkin

I can personally attest to this from an experience in Italy some years ago. Sylvia and I had eaten some oranges on a train and we kept the peels in a plastic bag in a small flight bag until we disposed of them in a trash can. We stayed overnight in a hotel and the next morning while preparing to pack we found our room inundated by an army of ants that had climbed three stories from the lawn below, attracted by the faint orange smell that emanated from the flight bag in which we kept the peel.



Some of our members are enjoying a holiday party from year's past.



Checking out the beverages at a past holiday party.



These guys are still hanging out around the beverages.

BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO (BSSF)

The BSSF is a non-profit educational organization promoting the study and cultivation of bromeliads. The BSSF meets monthly on the 3rd Thursday at 7:30 PM in the Recreation room of the San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. Meetings feature educational lectures and displays of plants. Go to the affiliate section of the BSI webpage for information about our meetings.

The BSSF publishes a monthly newsletter that comes with the membership. Annual dues are single (\$15), dual (\$20). To join the BSSF, mail your name(s), address, telephone number, e-mail address, and check made payable to the BSSF to:

Harold Charms, BSSF Treasurer, 255 States Street, San Francisco, CA 94114-1405.

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BROMELIAD SOCIETY
OF
SAN FRANCISCO

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Come to our holiday meeting for great food and fun!